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A bum paused in front of the store as Johnny brought in his things. Johnny'd seen him before, somewhere. Each time he'd asked him, for bird cages....

He had an affected delivery, as if he listened too much to his own voice. Johnny hadn't had anything to do with birds for years, and it irritated him that the man kept asking, each time explaining what he was looking for with painstaking and unnatural delivery, peering up at him through thick glasses.

He reminded Johnny of a sheep-dog. Early seventies, average height, slightly stocky, round-faced. He wore his dark hair long. He loitered in front of the store in short pants, white socks, a short-sleeved shirt, a straw sun-hat. He carried a package and a canvas bag that obviously held bottles of liquor.

This time he didn't want a bird-cage; he wanted a picture frame. Johnny didn't have one. He started to describe a picture he owned. Johnny wasn't interested.

Somebody saw it and offered him two hundred dollars for it. He wouldn't take it. He knew what it was worth. He said he'd purchased it nearly forty years ago directly from the artist.... He offered to show it to Johnny right there but he wasn't interested....

The man said if he was ever broke he could take it into any art store and get five hundred dollars for it; they'd get a thou-thou-

He staggered and hit his head on the curb before Johnny could catch him. Fucking bum. He was probably brain-damaged. A young man stopped and helped Johnny get him off the road, so he wouldn't get run over again and again on Thing Street. Another young man called an ambulance on his cell-phone. The operator must have started her catechism. Johnny heard the young man say he didn't think drugs were involved, except alcohol. Somebody told the young man to tell the operator to fuck off, but it didn't matter. He was dead.

The ambulance arrived anyway, with two attendants. They covered the corpse, and loaded it onto a stretcher.

He left his things behind on the curb. One was a soggy canvas bag full of broken liquor bottles. An attendant tossed it in after the corpse, with a loud chink.

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The other one was a brown paper package tied up with string. It was the picture he'd wanted to show Johnny. He unwrapped it.

He recognized the rapt-looking farmer standing beside the rustic house, the shed with the guts of the turbine laid out on the lawn, the smoke not dispersing naturally but contracting into an impossible inverted V....

The Villeneuve!

The collector saw it....

He pissed himself laughing.